



Meeting Date: 1/20/2022

AGENDA ITEM: 3c

DISCUSSION ITEM TITLE:

County's Response to Mental Health Situations in the Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the April 15, 2021 meeting of the Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission (Commission), there was a discussion to adopt the Budget Ad Hoc letter and recommendations, which included a recommendation to support Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Mental Evaluation Teams (MET).¹ During the discussion, members of the Commission mentioned a deputy-involved shooting of an individual who was experiencing a mental health crisis and questioned the availability of crisis response options other than MET such as the Department of Mental Health (DMH) models and other rapid response service options.

BACKGROUND:

In March 2021, LASD was involved in two deputy-involved shootings of individuals who were experiencing a mental health crisis. On March 14, 2021, LASD deputies assigned to the East Los Angeles Station responded to a call from a family member of an individual in the middle of a mental health episode. While waiting for personnel equipped with less lethal weapons and a MET to arrive,² deputies engaged with and fatally shot David Ordaz, Jr. On March 31, 2021, LASD deputies assigned to the East L.A. Station received a call that Isaias Cervantes, who is hard of hearing and has autism, was creating a disturbance in his home with family members. This encounter resulted in a nonfatal deputy-involved shooting with serious injuries.³ These tragic incidents are disheartening and a representative sample of similar incidents that have taken place throughout Los Angeles County.

¹ Civilian Oversight Commission. (April 14, 2021). COC Letter of Support Regarding LASD Budget Priorities for Fiscal Year 2021-2022. Retrieved from: http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/FY21-22BudgetPriorityLetterofSupportv.04.15.2021_signed.pdf

² Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. (2021). LASD Deputy Involved Shooting (DIS)-Ordaz. Retrieved from [Transparency 031421 ELA DIS Summary Ordaz David Jr 060221.pdf \(lasd.org\)](https://transparency.lasd.org/031421-ELA-DIS-Summary-Ordaz-David-Jr-060221.pdf)

³ Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. (2021). LASD Deputy Involved Shooting (DIS)-Cervantes. Retrieved from [Transparency 033121 ELA DIS Summary Cervantes Isaias 060221.pdf \(lasd.org\)](https://transparency.lasd.org/033121-ELA-DIS-Summary-Cervantes-Isaias-060221.pdf)

On January 10, 2017, the Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a motion requiring the Commission to identify improvements to the co-response team deployment model of the MET⁴ that consist of a deputy sheriff and a DMH licensed mental health clinician.⁵ LASD METs provide crisis assessment, intervention, and targeted case management services⁶ to diffuse potentially violent situations. MET has been credited with saving up to 34 lives during potential deadly use of force encounters in which 14 of the individuals were attempting “suicide by cop.”⁷ Despite its many successes, MET has not been available to respond to all LASD calls involving people experiencing a mental health crisis. With 32 teams in 2020, METs were dispatched and responded to 7,246 of 10,470 (69%) of LASD confirmed crises involving mental illness or developmental disability incident calls.⁸ As of January 11, 2022, LASD MET staff confirmed they have 34 MET teams, which includes 1 fully funded position from the City of West Hollywood.⁹ To help de-escalate crisis, reduce force and save lives during 2020, the average response time for MET countywide was approximately 18 minutes.¹⁰ Although there has been incremental increases to the number of teams, it has yet to reach 60 METs, which was the number recommended by the Commission in February 2018.¹¹ On April 14, 2021, the Commission sent a letter to L.A. County’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) supporting the budget prioritization to increase METs to 45 teams in order to provide 24-hour coverage for mental health crisis countywide.¹²

On November 1, 2021, LASD announced a Special Alert program to assist deputies when responding to calls that involve individuals that are suspected of having or have been diagnosed with an intellectual, mental, or physical disability.¹³ The program allows caregivers or family members to provide a voluntarily form with information about a person living in their home who is suspected of having or has been diagnosed with an intellectual, mental or physical disability.¹⁴

⁴ Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. (2017). January 10, 2017 Motion: Co-Response Teams and De-escalation. Retrieved from [110687.pdf \(lacounty.gov\)](#)

⁵ L.A. County Sheriff’s Department. (2022). Mental Evaluation Team Reports. Retrieved from [MET | LASD \(lasd.org\)](#)

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. (2020). Calendar Year 2020 Recap & Summary Report. Retrieved from [Transparency MET Annual Recap 2020 012521.pdf \(lasd.org\)](#)

⁹ Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. (2019). Los Angeles County Sheriff MET. Retrieved from [West Hollywood Sheriff’s Station Mental Evaluation Team \(MET\) \(Los Angeles County Sheriff\) — Nextdoor — Nextdoor](#)

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ L.A. County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission. (2018). Report Regarding the Mental Evaluation Teams Program of the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department. Retrieved from [LinkClick.aspx \(lacounty.gov\)](#)

¹² Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission. (2021). CEO Letter of Support Regarding LASD Budget Priorities for Fiscal Year 2021-2022. Retrieved from [Los Angeles County \(lacounty.gov\)](#)

¹³ Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. (2021). Sheriff Announces Special Alert Form and Presents Check to Autism Society of LA. Retrieved from [Sheriff Announces Special Alert form and presents Check to Autism Society of LA \(lasd.org\)](#)

¹⁴ Ibid.

LASD will enter the information into the computer dispatch system, and deputies will receive that information when responding to service calls at the residence.¹⁵

On June 8, 2021, the Board adopted another motion “Expanding Alternative Crisis Response in L.A. County”¹⁶ that required DMH and the CEO to provide a plan to expand the alternative crisis response system, which includes increasing the operation hours of the Psychiatric Mobile Response Team (PMRT) program to 24/7.¹⁷ The DMH plan also consists of the development of a competitive solicitation for community-based organizations to provide contracted PMRT services as well as the use of 9-8-8 as the central receiving phone number for behavioral health emergency/crisis and suicide-related response needs.¹⁸ DMH has advised the Board of its difficulty recruiting and retaining its field-based workforce, which has impacted key community mental health services provided by entities such as MET and PMRT.¹⁹ On October 19, 2021, the Board adopted a motion instructing DMH and the CEO to explore options to improve recruitment and retention of field-based positions.²⁰ DMH and the CEO are currently identifying the best approach and will report back to the Board.

RECOMMENDATION/CONCLUSION:

After reviewing information and materials referenced in this report as well as understanding that 1 in 25 adults experience serious mental illness each year,²¹ staff in consultation with the MET ad hoc committee recommends the Commission should:

1. Request that LASD collaborate with DMH and Mental Health Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to provide MET services at the level of 60 METs as recommended by the Commission in February 2018, incrementally starting at 45 METS the next fiscal year; to encourage collaboration between DMH, LASD MET, and CBOs such as Star Behavioral Health, Exodus and others, to engage licensed mental health practitioners to work as part of MET co-

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. (2021). June 8, 2021 Motion: Expanding Alternative Crisis Response in Los Angeles County. Retrieved from [158865.pdf \(lacounty.gov\)](#)

¹⁷ L.A. County Department of Mental Health. (2021). Report on Expanding Alternative Crisis Response. Retrieved from [1113849_ReportResponse_ExpandingAlternativeCrisisResponseinLosAngelesCounty_Item6AgendaofJune82021 .pdf \(lacounty.gov\)](#)

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. (2021). October 19, 2021 Motion: Enhancing Recruitment and Retention for Mental Health Fields Positions. Retrieved from [DoubleMotion_2012 \(lacounty.gov\)](#)

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ National Alliance on Mental Illness-California. (2021). Facts & Statistics. Retrieved from [Facts & Statistics - NAMI California](#)

response teams; and that LASD provide a written report to the Commission on the progress of such collaborations semi-annually beginning on July 11, 2022;

2. Request a LASD designated subject matter expert(s) appear before the Commission on February 17, 2022, to provide the Commission with answers about the following Department’s operations, practices and activities associated with the LASD response to calls regarding individuals suspected of having mental illness:
- a. Outreach efforts and number of responses entered into the system for the Special Alert program, including an overview of the factors that LASD uses to decide how to best approach the incident;

b. Mental Evaluation Teams (MET) expansion, collaboration, recruitment, and retention efforts;

c. Other Department activities and practices to mitigate and eradicate use of force involving individuals with intellectual, mental, or physical disabilities

GUEST SPEAKERS (on-call):

- Miriam Brown, Deputy Director, DMH

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COC:tj

Motion

Robert Bonner:	_____	Sean Kennedy:	_____
Patti Giggans:	_____	Priscilla Ocen:	_____
James P. Harris:	_____	Lael Rubin:	_____